

said sealing member including a principal encapsulation material covering a central area of the rear surface of said photovoltaic cells and a steam barrier material different from the principal encapsulation material and covering a peripheral area of the rear surface of said photovoltaic cells, said steam barrier [member] material showing a steam permeability not greater than 1 g/m² day per film thickness of 100 µm.

5. (Amended) Photovoltaic module comprising:
a transparent substrate[:];
photovoltaic cells formed on [the] a rear surface of said transparent substrate;
an output lead-out wire connected to said photovoltaic cells;
a filling member for sealing said photovoltaic cells; and
a rear surface encapsulation material arranged on the rear surface of said filling member;

said output lead-out wire being drawn to the rear surface of said rear surface encapsulation material from the inside of said filling member by way of an output lead-out section, [the filling member of said output lead-out section being not directly exposed to the atmosphere] wherein the output lead-out wire has a parallel section extending over a part of the rear surface encapsulation material, and wherein another part of the rear surface encapsulation material extends over the output lead-out section and the parallel section of the output lead-out wire.

6. (Amended) A method of manufacturing a photovoltaic module comprising:
a step of laying a sheet of encapsulation resin adapted to be softened, molten and cured by heat on the rear surface of a photovoltaic sub-module having a plurality of unit cells tightly arranged on a light-transmitting glass substrate and then laying a protection film having dimensions greater than the glass substrate on the sheet of encapsulation resin;

a step of bonding the protection film to the rear surface of said photovoltaic sub-module by softening, melting and completely curing said encapsulation resin; and

a step of cutting off the portion of the encapsulation resin extending from said glass substrate as a result of the melt of said encapsulation resin along with the corresponding portion of the protection film under the condition of keeping the temperature of the extending portion of said encapsulation resin above the softening point of the encapsulation resin.

7. (Amended) A method of manufacturing a photovoltaic module comprising:

a step of laying [s] a sheet of encapsulation resin adapted to be softened, molten and cured by heat on the rear surface of a photovoltaic sub-module having a plurality of unit cells tightly arranged on a light-transmitting glass substrate and then laying a protection film having dimensions greater than the glass substrate on the sheet of encapsulation resin;

a step of bonding said sheet of encapsulation resin and said protection film to said photovoltaic sub-module under pressure in vacuum, while heating [then] in vacuum heating/bonding apparatus;

a step of taking said photovoltaic sub-module out of said vacuum heating/bonding apparatus [on the way of curing] while said encapsulation resin is curing;

a step of cutting off the portion of the encapsulation resin extending from said glass substrate as result of [the melt of] melting in said heating/bonding apparatus along with the corresponding portion of the protection film; and

a step of heating and completely curing said encapsulation resin in a separate heating apparatus.